Musings of a Himalayan Monk

Swami Shantananda Puri

MUSINGS OF A HIMALAYAN MONK

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PREFACE

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SRI GURUBHYO NAMAH

In an earlier book, named 'The Fragrant Flowers', the author had narrated his experiences with a number of saints and especially so with his own Gurudev late Swami Purushottamanandaji Maharaj. Incidentally, he had also vividly described therein how his association with a number of saints starting from his childhood and culminating in the boundless grace of his own Gurudev not only pushed him into the spiritual path but ensured his quick spiritual progress too. This present book is a sequel to the previous one continuing with his spiritual experiences. This book also enables the readers to have a glimpse of some of the miraculous experiences which some devotees or friends of the author have had in subsequent years.

In Vasishtha Guha, the hermitage in the Himalayas where the authors Gurudev did penance for many long years, the latter's message is displayed prominently at the entrance of the cave. It reads thus:

What are we seeking? Bliss!

Wha! we are seeking is within us. Within us is a huge roaring ocean of divine and infinite bliss, a single drop of which can completely destroy all our woes forever and transport us to a high state of ecstasy. But foolishly we look for this outside. To imagine that wife, children, wealth, name, fame etc., can bring happiness is a mere illusion. Our state is like that of a deer which contains the musk in its own navel but in its ignorance seeks this divine scent in its surroundings, in trees, creepers, grass etc. The teachings of our great sages alone can, therefore, give us pure, unalloyed and eternal bliss."

Like the musk deer most people are deluded and entangle themselves in the worldly mesh, seeking happiness within its confines, little realizing that it brings only sorrow. Sadhana or spiritual practices which are needed for this cannot be attained by our will alone. It is only through Divine Grace that we can succeed. For the Divine Grace to be manifest there is need for a spiritual guide or Guru.

Blessed indeed are those who have got the privilege of sitting at the feet of a Guru. If you get a Sad-Guru to whom you surrender yourself wholly, you

become free at that very moment This is not empty prattle. The author has recorded his experiences as a testimony to the infinite, unparalleled compassion of his Gurudev whom he regards as his saviour. The several anecdotes related in this book bear witness to the benediction of the Lord which works through the medium of a Guru and had vapourised coses% in the Ilves of his disciples. True devotion and complete surrender to Guru alone are the lasting solution to all miseries in this world The Guru takes us to the Lord who is our ultimate refuge.

If this book strengthens the faith of the sadhaks already on the spiritual path and ignites a spark of longing for the Divine in others, the task of the author would we truly accomplished.

- Dr. S. Rohini, I.E.S.
Senior Economic Adviser. Govt of India

MUSINGS OF
A HIMALAYAN MONK

1. Frankly

Frankly I do not know how and where to begin. In my former book “Fragrant Flowers" I have narrated my meeting with various saints including my Gurudev and incidentally about my sadhanas which were all made possible only because of the motiveless and undeserved (from my view point) shower of Grace from my Gurudev. This Grace has led me also from time to time to the holy environment of Sri Ramanasramam at Tiruvannamalai where the incomparable glory and the explicit presence of the highest Divinity known to the world as Bhagavan Ramana are being experienced by the devotees unmistakably even today. In days of yore, the kings used to convene a ‘Swayamvara’ when all the eligible kings and princes used to assemble. When once the princess chose a good husband out of the kings assembled and married him, there was no more any need for her to search for another groom. Similarly when once I got a Sadguru who looks after my

temporal and spiritual welfare and who has led me to Sri Ramanasramam with vibrations highly conducive to Self-realisation there was no need for me to seek any more saints/gurus. Secondly as the ultimate state of perfection is a state of non-experience where the Reality alone exists, which does not react, the question of any miracle or wonder or any experience whatsoever ceases to arise as one grows to his inner consciousness. Further just as memories of dreams are erased in the waking state, all past memories become vague or extinct and it is with some difficulty that I am able to recall some of them although without a sense of chronological sequence. While we are trying to get established in the highest Truths the so-called past loses its importance or significance. Certain incidents or events which we remember, though they may look miraculous, are all meant to remind us of the glory and the deep compassion of the Supreme Lord in order to instill deep faith and devotion in the hearts of the people who have benefited by those incidents or events.

2. TRANSFER TO DESIRED PLACE

In mid-2001 a Sardarji disciple of mine - Mr. 'A'- was to go to USA for about a year's stay for doing some research work. About ten days before his departure to U.S.A. I was passing through Delhi. 'A' came to meet me and sought my blessings. Casually I suggested that it would be good if he could go to Vasishtha Guha (my Gurusthan in the Himalayas) before departing for U.S.A and get a Mrityunjaya havan done through a priest - a small fire sacrifice which is supposed to avert accidents and premature dangers to life. I had never given a similar instruction to anybody else in my life. Mr. A followed my suggestion and departed for U.S A after implementing it. On the day (11-9-2001) when the Twin Towers (World Trade Centre) were knocked down by terrorists in USA. Mr. A was very much in an office building next to the Tower but escaped unhurt when all around him there was death and devastation. Some may attribute it to chance but it is positively due to God's Grace as can be seen from the subsequent incidents.

In the year 2004 Mr. A was transferred as G.M of his organisation (Parastatal) on promotion from Delhi to Bombay. As his second child was just born, he

managed to postpone his trip to Bombay by getting a sanction for postponing his joining at Bombay till about the end of Septeniber'94 or so. Later on, he again applied for a further postponement upto 1st December'04. He followed up his application by flying to Bombay to meet personally his boss who bluntly refused to accede to his request which was, in the latter's opinion, thoroughly unreasonable. Mr. 'A' was disappointed and lamented to me over the phone. I only told him. "Leave it to the Lord who has so long been favourable to you. You have not quarrelled with Him since". A week later, as his boss perhaps relented on second thought, 'A' got a letter sanctioning the postponement.

After joining at Bombay Mr. A continued to be unhappy at the unfavourable environment at Bombay but early in April' 05 began to think of shifting his family also from Delhi to Bombay. I was then at Vasishtha Guha in the Himalayas and 'A' was often in contact with me on phone and used to unburden himself. My only reply to all such people was "Leave it all to GOD who will certainly do what is good for us" By about 2nd May '05, Mr. A rang me up and informed me with jubilation that his boss had posted him back

to Delhi with immediate effect in an equivalent post newly created. Such series of favourable events to the same man can never be attributed to chance. Surely, they were all due to the compassion of the Supreme Lord, at least in my opinion and the deep faith sincerity and intense devotion of the devotee.

3. CAUGHT FROM CHILDHOOD

When I look upon my life in retrospect, even though I was a very ordinary dull child without any spark of a religious fervour or spiritual proclivities, I am now able to see clearly that the hand of the Divine Mother had always been behind me and supporting me at each step.

From childhood, I was being coached at home in ‘Sanskrit' language by my father and while I was a boy of six, I was put in a Sanskrit college and I studied scriptures and literature i.e. Vyakarana, Meemamsa, Tarka and the works of famous authors like Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti etc., for a period of four years and passed a Government Entrance Examination in 1939 entitling me to the pursuit of specialised graduate courses (SIROMANI) of 4 years’ duration each. I was extremely cross with my father as all my brothers and sisters

were given the normal education in English schools/colleges from childhood while I alone was given Sanskrit education, which was considered to be of no professional value for earning one's livelihood in those days. How grateful I am today to the Lord for getting such a strong foundation in Sanskrit which has enabled me in later years to study the scriptures like Srimad Bhagavatam, Ramayanam, Upanishads and other Vedantic texts like Sankara's directly without the need of a tutor or translation through Sanskrit commentaries. Even though mastery in Sanskrit is not a must for God-realisation, still it is a great privilege to possess the key to open the golden doors to the ancient wisdom of the seers (Rishis). How and on what basis God selected me and got me trained for the days to come while I had shown no promise of any development intelligence, knowledge, religious or spiritual inclinations still remains a mystery to me. Is this what is called the Causeless Grace (ahaituka karuna) of the Supreme Divine Mother?

After finishing the four years of Sanskrit study I was denied entrance to the Siromani Courses on the ground that I was grossly underaged (10 years) while as per the University rules the minimum age

prescribed or joining the college course was 14 years and six months. At home my father had coached me excellently well in English (I could read fiction/novels in English) and moderately well in Arithmetic (not Algebra or Geometry). My father did not know what to do with me and was stumped. Normally, in an English School, l should have had to join in the first standard where boys of 5 to 6 years of age used to study in those days The Headmaster of the only High School in that town was our next door neighbour and had studied Sanskrit under my grandfather - a reputed scholar in Advaita philosophy. Further, my elder brother had studied under him and come out first in the-then Madras Presidency (now Tamilnadu). One day he, of his own accord, called my father and after enquiring about me asked him whether I would be fit to join 4th Form (9th standard in those days as the final Public exam of 6th Form was called S.S.LC. examination). My father sounded doubtful but the Headmaster handed over to him the question papers of the annual examination of 3rd Form (8th Std.) in Mathematics and English and asked him to get me thoroughly prepared in those two papers as he would be giving me the same papers for my Fitness Test to be

conducted after 3 weeks. No wonder I got through the test and joined the 4th Form directly. The Headmaster was neither related to us nor was he a close friend of my family and my father had never thought of approaching him at all for my admission. Perhaps the poor man had thought unwittingly that I would prove to be as brilliant as my brother and bring credit to his school (I just passed out without distinguishing myself in any way). Here again. I realized many years later that it was the hand of God which forced the headmaster to resort to an explicitly unlawful act to make me join his School in a higher class. Lord, you could never have got a more stupid candidate for your mercy! To what level you had to sink in order to help me out!

My father was a Sanskrit Pandit on a meagre salary and as he had already just managed to make a post-graduate of my elder brother, he was not in a position to think of giving me college education. As I was still under-aged (14 years) and not eligible to join a college I studied stenography for a year in my town and got a diploma. It was then that somebody suggested to my father that he should try for my free boarding and lodging in CLIVE'S Hostel attached to St

Joseph's College, Trichinopoly as a 'water boy' whose only duty was to serve drinking water during meals to the student-diners in the Hostel. Without any recommendation, my father took me to Rev. Father Ehrhart who was the principal as also the warden of the Hostel along with my certificate and not a too-encouraging marksheet I was given admission in the College as also in the Hostel as a water boy (there were six water boys for every 300 paying members) from 1942 to 1947.

There was an interesting incident in that year. At my father s request, the late Sankaracharya of Kanchi (Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati) introduced me to a rich Chief and Sole Trustee of a Trust for scholarships to students and told him to award some scholarship amount to me. As desired by the Trustee when I went to his house at Trichy later, he admonished me for not having kept the hair uncut on my head as befitting a Brahmin and also for having joined a Christian Missionary College. He also asked me as to how unashamedly I could dare approach the Sankaracharya of Kanchi for a recommendation. I coolly answered him: - "Sir, it is really strange that when such a great religious head has accepted me as

I am, you are raising these objections now which you had failed to voice in the presence of the Sankaracharya himself". He was livid and rendered speechless with fury but I walked away unconcerned. I must also record that when once I happened to mention my financial strait, the Principal himself (of German origin) used to give me every quarter half the amount of the college fees in cash. Is it that I am unique or mad in finding retrospectively the compassionate hand of the Lord behind every major event in my life or is it that a few like me are privileged and chosen to have their eyes opened to the splendid glory of the Lord manifested in every phase of every one's life from time to time so that we surrender ourselves to that benign glory unconditionally?

4. A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

After my graduation, though I was working as a teacher in some school, my ambition compelled me to seek better prospects through interviews for various Government jobs. I failed in all the interviews as the examining Board used to put questions on intricate topics in physics and chemistry (which I had

thoroughly forgotten) as also on world affairs/politics in which I had no interest.

At last, in one interview for the Audit Department in 1949, out of the three members in the Board, all I.A. & A.S. officers, one was an M.A. (OXEN) in Sanskrit while another was a Sanskrit scholar. Early in the interview when once I indicated that I had a Sanskrit background they plied me with questions on various aspects of the Sanskrit literature. I was in my elements in that field and was able to answer brilliantly, I was finally selected. Can it be called a chance or was it deliberately designed by the Lord?

5. QUALIFIED BUT NO SUITABLE JOB

It is really a wonder to see how the Lord plays with the devotees, sometimes indulging them in their innocent whims but frustrating their serious attempts to foster their ambitions to rise in the ladder of material success. I find in it the truth of Vrutrasura's prayer in the battlefield that "When the Lord thoroughly frustrates all our attempts to succeed in the fields of Dharma (say acts of charity), Artha (accumulation of wealth) and Kama (fulfilment of desires) we have then to infer that the Lord has

begun to shower his Grace on us[1]". This fact was experienced by me in my own life.

While I was on deputation with the Government of Tanzania (East Africa) from 1967 to 1971, I decided to appear for the cost accounting examinations of London (I.C.M.A-earlier known as I.C.W.A) in five parts. After passing them all in 2½ years (one part every six months) without any tuition or facilities to consult anybody on new subjects like Economics, Statistics, Business Administration etc., I applied for Associate membership on the basis of my earlier experience under the Government of India. For that I had to submit a 20-page answer seriatim to their questionnaire with searching, in-depth and intricate technical questions on the actual workings in various Government Factories with which I was involved some four years back. It was to have been authenticated page by page by the topmost boss of my department under the Indian Government. As the officers under whom I had worked had all died or retired or gone away to other formations it would have been next to

[1] त्रैवर्गिकायासविघातमस्म-त्पतिर्विधत्ते पुरुषस्य शक्र ।
ततोऽनुमेयो भगवत्प्रसादो यो दुर्लभोऽकिञ्चनगोचरोऽन्यैः ॥ 6.11.23 ॥
Shrimad Bhagavata Purana

impossible to get my experience-questionnaire authenticated but miraculously as the Administrative Officer working under the big boss in India at that time was a good friend of mine, he authenticated the statement under his own signature embossing it with the departmental seal and I got my Associateship in 1971.

On my return to India I wanted to encash on my new qualification by applying for top cost-management, jobs but nowhere was I called even for an interview for the next 15 years to come (till retirement). This is where the Lord put. his feet down as He perhaps thought that it was time for me to turn towards spiritual sadhana more earnestly. Enough is enough.

6. A PARTNER IN SUBTERFUGE

An interesting incident happened while I returned from Tanzania (East Africa) to India in November 1971 by a ship. We docked at Bombay at about 1 p.m. on a particular day and up-to 9 p.m. the Customs clearance did not take place. An announcement was made that we should leave all our baggages including jewellery (which will have to be

assessed for duty to be paid) at the customs shed, go home and return next morning for clearance. The lady of the house accompanying me was having a lot of gold jewellery on her body as we were afraid of putting them in the boxes to be left in the shed. I left it to the Lord and when my turn came, the Customs Officer who scrutinised the official Passports asked me as to what was my designation under the Government. This was because, in the Passport under the column 'Designation and Office' it was only written "Government Servant". I asked him in reply "As the passport has been issued by the Headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs and not by any passport officer, don't you think that they would have recorded my designation unless they did not want it to be revealed." The Customs Officer again asked me in a conspiratorial tone as to whether I was from "Intelligence". I replied with a smile - Do you expect me to acknowledge it here in public in case I happened to be from 'Intelligence'? In a reverential tone, the officer allowed me and my family to go out without bothering to look at the jewellery the lady wore with the parting words "It is O.K. Sir. You may go." Surely the Lord was my partner in the subterfuge as

otherwise how could I have ever answered the Customs Officer in the dubious way I did unless inspired by the Lord and got away with it. Lord, who can understand your play to this world! Lord, you have been rightly called in the Vedas (RUDRAM OF YAJURVEDA) as the chief of cheats, confidence-trickster, thief etc. Was all this help you rendered in worldly matters of your own accord meant to seduce me slowly and slyly to your path, to make me finally a footpath fakir (a footpath trodden by Maharshis and saints)?

7. PUBLISHING OF SPIRITUAL BOOKS

God had brought me into contact with many souls out of whom some were meant to get some benefits (not necessarily spiritual alone) and others were meant to benefit me and through me some sadhaks.

Soon after taking Sannyas when I visited Anandashram at Kanhangad one of the devotees from Bangalore, a retired class I officer from Central Government, Mr. A. introduced himself to me. When he knew that I was on a vow of silence for three or four days, he offered to supply me with some famous variety of ripe Kerala Bananas (Nendram) as I was not

taking any meals at night in those days. He brought and gave me a dozen or more bananas together to last for three or four days. When he visited my room on the second and third day of my silence, he did not find any of those bananas outside. After I ended my silence he enquired about it tactfully. I told him that as a Sannyasi I was prohibited by rules to carry forward stocks of eatable items to subsequent days and hence, after taking two bananas on the first day of receiving them I had distributed the balance to visitors.

True to the adage that a new broom sweeps clean, I was trying in my earlier years as a monk to follow the discipline more strictly. Mr. A was shocked and regretted his lapse in not having given two or three bananas every day instead of giving them all on one day. Perhaps this minor incident impressed him a lot and he has continued to maintain close and intimate contact with me in the years to come.

A year or so later, he happened to go to Madras (now Chennai) to the house of a close friend of mine (Mr J. Padmanabha Iyer) who was then perusing a sheaf of papers, received in that day's post. On enquiry Mr. P. told him (Mr. A) that those papers contained a manuscript summary of Srimad Bhagavatam with

special emphasis on the various sadhanas (spiritual practices) prescribed for attaining God-Realisation and the esoteric explanation of the various anecdotes and stories in the context of Spiritual Sadhana. I had written this book-like summary and sent it to Mr. P. with a request to get some 4 or 5 computer prints-out made and send them to me at my address in the Himalayas (Vasishtha Guha) to enable me to circulate among my disciples and friends who had been pressing me since long to put in writing the essence of my Saptaham-lectures which I used to give in Vasishta Guha during the birth day celebrations of my Gurudev every year. Mr. 'A' perused those papers, borrowed them for a week and after consultation with a lawyer friend of his showed them to one Mr. Sakala Narasimhalu Chetty (Mr. N) - a reputed jeweller and a scholar deeply engaged as an organiser in spiritual activities at Bangalore. Mr. 'N' advised that it should be got printed as a book and promised to bear the entire cost of printing one thousand copies By God's will, an excellent Printer Sri Venkatesh Babu of Omkar Offset Printers at Bangalore offered to get them printed at 'no profit/no loss' basis. At no time in my life I had ever imagined that I could author a book

worth publishing. Certainly I had no literary talents and had never even contributed a single article to my School or College magazines even. This is all a leela (sport) of the Lord who uses people for his own ends. The first news that my book on Srimad Bhagavatam was under print reached me while I was confined in a silence room for two months in an Ashram in Gujarat, only when the printing was in progress. Simultaneously, a Kannada translation of this book also saw the light, sponsored by Sri Pathi Panduranga of Bangalore. Not only a re-print and a second revised edition of the English version were released but it was translated into Telugu, Hindi and Tamil and published.

Mostly at the specific suggestions from 'A', many other books on Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Vasishta, Lalita Sahasranamam, Ashtavakra Gita etc., flowed from my pen (to my own utter astonishment) in the later years (till now) and were got published. No contributions or donations for the printing expenses of any of the books were sought Each time some devotees came forward voluntarily to meet the printing and distribution expenses of each book unsolicited and in a miraculous manner.

None of the books was priced and all copies were distributed to the readers free and even the packing and postal charges were met by the Printers (Mr. Babu) who did the entire work with an unparalleled devotion, sincerity and meticulousness.

Lord does His work for the ultimate welfare of the world without any publicity by influencing and using people as the instruments for carrying out his will GLORY BE TO THAT LORD. May we always chant His holy names so that we may also earn from Him the ultimate benefit viz. Moksha.

8. RAMNAM BRINGS DOWN FEVER

It was sometime in 1972 and I was staying in Kanjur marg (at that time a remote outskirt of Bombay near Vikhroli). One night, the child in that house aged 1½ years suddenly developed high temperature at 11 p.m. or 12 o clock at midnight and the nearest doctor's house known to me was at King's Circle (MATUNGA) - more than 10 to 15 kms. away. At that time of the night it was next to impossible to get a taxi or other conveyance in that area. There was no telephone facility anywhere in the vicinity. The mother of the

child was chanting the name of Lord Ram throughout the night and there was nothing else we could do. By 2 a.m. the severity of the fever came down considerably and by 5 a.m. we could take the child by a taxi to the house of a doctor who pronounced that the child was having diphtheria and any further delay in starting treatment would have spelt danger. Lord, how many times you have shown that taking your name repeatedly is a sure guarantee against any danger. My Gurudev used to recite a sloka on Ram: - "I bow again and again to that most handsome and loving God Ram who is an expert in dispelling all calamities or dangers and bestowing all wealth to a devotee.[2]"

9. ADMISSION IN SCHOOL

On my transfer from Bombay to Delhi in July 1974 (in my Purvashram period) my son (at that time aged 3 years) had to be admitted in a school (he had completed L.K.G at Bombay). The boy only knew how to recite numbers from one to hundred and had no idea of Zero concept and addition (plus) etc. As

[2] आपदामपहर्तारं दातारं सर्वसंपदाम्।
लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम्।।

admissions had already been closed, the Lady Principal of St Anthony Public School at that time refused admission flatly. On second thought, she asked me “Will he be fit for Prep. Class? There is no vacancy in H.KG. Class”. I said “He is very good in talking and reading in English and knows some Arithmetic” The principal asked one teacher to test the boy in Arithmetic. The teacher took the boy aside and put questions as below: -

Question 1: What is Zero plus 1?

Answer: One (The boy did not know zero or plus but as all number recital exercises started with one he answered one).

Question 2: What does 1 plus 1 make?

Answer: Two (The boy did not know what is plus (+) and as he had already told 1 he told the next number 2).

The teacher certified to the Principal that the boy was excellent and he was admitted. Is it not another evidence of Lord’s Grace?

10. RAM GRANTS ADMISSION IN COLLEGE

I remember another incident about prayer to Ram.

In my pre-monk days as a householder at Chennai, sometime in 1989 or so, my Purvashram sister-in-law had a daughter who had set her mind on joining the college for girls set up by Sri SATYA SAI BABA at Anantapur (Andhra). As reported by a newspaper she had passed the 12th standard examination as a private candidate from Indira Gandhi Open University at Delhi. She had already been selected for admission in the Satya Sai College on the basis of a personal interview subject to her passing the 12th Std. Even though all the regular candidates appearing through a School had all got their mark sheets, even after a fortnight the girl ('R') did not get hers. A strict communication was received on a Friday from the college that her name would be struck off from the admission list unless she presented herself before the Principal on the following Monday with her marksheet. For all correspondence purposes she had given my house address to the University. On Saturday following, both the girl and her mother rushed to my house and were weeping and praying to Baba. The lady of my house (the girl's aunty) went to the Puja room, sat before Ram's picture and began praying. Suddenly she heard

a voice saying “you are getting the mark-list in today’s post”. All the three were waiting outside my flat for the postman to come The postman came at 12 noon, delivered some letters to the opposite flat by putting them in their post-box, declared that there were no letters for my flat and went away The ladies and the girl came inside the house and were copiously weeping, not knowing what to do. At about 2 p.m. the lady of the house again went out and just saw one envelope jutting out of the letter box in the opposite flat whose occupants had gone out for 3 or 4 days. She took it out and saw to her immense delight that the envelope was meant for our flat only and on opening found the much-awaited marksheet.

What a Cat and Mouse play of the Lord! He intended to teach them a lesson that in rightful cases, God never lets down his devotees who should never waver in their faith however adverse be the circumstances. We should be able to accept even if the verdict of the Lord be unfavourable and that is real surrender.

11. GOD COMMANDS ME TO GET CHEATED

Talking of surrender, let us never rake it for granted that God is only our wish-fulfilling tree who will go on granting whatever we want. It is even possible that He may allow you to be looted or cheated by somebody. A sadhaka should develop equanimity to remain unmoved by both happiness and misery as also loss and profit.

Once, while at Vasishtha Guha, a well-dressed and cultured gentleman was brought to my room and introduced by Sri Chaitanyanandaji Swamiji (Swami C) in charge of the Guha Ashram, as a judge from Dehra Dun subsequently transpired to Allahabad. From the very first introduction he was very much attached to me and during his subsequent visits never failed to bring a lot of fruits/biscuits for me and also give me a cash dakshina of Rs. 51 or 101 many times despite all my protests and refusal. Swami C used to introduce him to all the important devotees of the Guha and the judge freely promised to use his influence and get things done for those devotees who approached him for a favourable transfer, a job for somebody's son etc. After a year or so. one Saturday in 1995 he came and announced during meals that when he was travelling

in A.C. Class in a train from Allahabad the previous night, he was robbed of his suit case containing files relating to some criminal cases, all his clothings and also his pass book and cheque book. He then followed me to my room after lunch, told me that he was in dire need of some money and asked me how much money I had with me. I told him that I had only Rs. 50 or so in cash but that I had some Rs. 3 200 or so in my savings account in the local State Bank. He wanted me to draw and give him Rs 3.000 which would be returned by him on the third day (Tuesday). I informed Swami C and went along with the judge in the latter's taxi to the bank which was of 3 minutes' ride. While in the Taxi I heard a voice telling me 'This gentleman is a fraud who is no more a judge than you are. But you will have to give him Rs. 3.000/- which you will never get back". It flashed into my mind that it was the Divine Mother's voice. I withdrew and gave the money to the 'judge' who went away.

When I related the Mother's warming to Swami 'C', he at once asked me "When you got the warming that he was a fraud why were you so foolish as to loan the money?" I told the Swamiji "It is the same Divine Mother who warned me but commanded me to give

the money to him. So I had to obey her command." He then told me. "You must be wrong. That judge had been personally introduced to me by the Chief Swamiji of a reputed Ashram in Rishikesh. You have been imagining things". Swami C came to know after a couple of days that the judge had taken substantial loans on that very Saturday from two other devotees of the Guha at Rishikesh on different pretexts and subsequently went away from Rishikesh. He was never seen again but later on Swami 'C' came to know that he was an impostor (a disreputable lawyer) who had cheated in various places. It made no difference to me and my Divine Mother has since repaid me several times over in various ways.

12. HOSE PIPE CASE

Bhagavan alone is capable of doing any real miracle in this world. Everything about Him is a wonder. Sometimes He bestows a much-wanted boon by taking away the miseries of some devotees who attribute it to their Guru or other saints and begin to worship the latter with more love and reverence. I call it the Hose-pipe case. One reputed Indian Swamiji (Y) based in USA had many rich actresses from Hollywood

as his devotees. One Sunday one of the rich actresses, gorgeously dressed and wearing a mink coat was just entering into the gate of the Swamiji's Ashram when the later espied her from the terrace. He came downstairs by the staircase on the back of the building and went to the side farther from the gate, where one of the monks (K) known for his pride and egoism was watering the plants with a big hose-pipe. Swami Y snatched the hose-pipe from K's hands and directed it towards the actress coming from the gate. The lady along with her costly mink coat was drenched completely. She failed to see Mr. Y who operated from the cover of the side wall. Swamiji just shoved the hose-pipe again into the hands of the monk and disappeared into the building by the same way by which he had come down. The actress, full of fury, rushed to the side wall where the monk 'K' was standing with the hose-pipe in hand, scolded him severely for his unmonk-like act and threatened to see that he was expelled from the Ashram. In the meantime, Swamiji (Y) appeared on the scene and joined the outraged actress in upbraiding the monk in vituperative terms for his mean act of drenching such an honoured guest. Poor 'K' was standing

dumbfounded incapable of defending himself. From that day onwards the monk 'K' lost all his pride, the actress also left off her sense of superiority and began to dress herself in a simple manner.

In many cases narrated below God has helped some devotees by dispelling their miseries or by fulfilling their desires but in such a manner that the devotees were misled to think that I was the cause of their blessings, resulting In their devotion and love towards me more strengthened despite all my protests and pleading 'not guilty'.

13. Ms. D SEES HER GURU IN HONOLULU

One Ms. D of Honolulu (U.S.A.) once came to VASISHTHA GUHA in 1995 or so where she remained in my company for 3 hours or so along with some thirty other devotees. Since then she has been persistently keeping up her correspondence with me. She was bodily deformed with bends in several places from neck to foot. In her earlier years, 12 operations or so were done to set the deformities in the backbone and the entire bone was fused along with the nerves around. By 1999 or so some of the nerves and portions inside the backbone got degenerated. Four more

operations were proposed by surgeons in U.S.A. as she was subject to unbearable pain which was kept under limits through daily injections. By that time, due to her repeated insistence, I had given her Mantra Diksha through correspondence after having visualised her form in my meditation and given her the mantra through imagination. I suggested to her not to undergo the operations again but try to get treated by a good Reikhi master. She was regularly doing Japa. Luckily, she found in one of the islands of Honolulu a good Reikhi master who gave her initiation in self-healing. On the day she got Reikhi initiation, there was another younger lady too who took initiation along with D. At the very start Ms. D saw me with a rosary (japa mala) in hand sitting by the side of the Lady Master and it continued during the entire initiation process. At the end of the initiation the lady sitting by the side of 'D' asked her "Who is that Indian monk-like person with a beard who was sitting with the Master all along? Do you know him?" - This was a confirmation for D that it was not an individual illusion. D wrote to me all this and informed me after about a couple of months that her pains had practically disappeared and she was well enough After

that she visited me some three years back or so at Vasishtha Guha and spent three days by daily coming to Guha from Rishikesh. She felt that I was behind her improvement in health and recovery from an excruciating pain. She little knew that I have been myself suffering from severe continuous pains in stomach region for the last few years from time to time and all my spiritual powers could not relieve me of those pains till I submitted to surgical operation. Here I am reminded of a small a funny story. One devotee did tapas (penance) for a number of years and God Ganesha (the elephant-faced God) appeared before him.

The devotee requested the Lord to grant him the possession of an Ambassador car. Lord Ganesha laughed and told him: - “My dear devotee, if I can give you an Ambassador car why, do you think, that I continue to ride on a mouse (a rodent)?” This is just a jocular story.

14. GOD RESTORES HEALTH AND STATUS

Some 9 years back or so (in 1996) while I was camping at Chennai, an unknown lady (Mrs. L) came to me and requested me for Mantra Diksha for both

herself and her husband. The next day she arrived with her husband who has had a partial paralytic stroke (on one side) and had to be supported while walking. Both of them had Mantra Diksha (initiation) and did not tell me anything about themselves or their family circumstances. It seems they were passing through a bad time. Their business was completely down, their car had to be sold (perhaps even their house was under negotiation for sale) and the husband had a sudden paralytic attack But they had utter faith that if they were to take initiation from me they would be able to come up again in life. In less than a month's time since they began doing the Japa, amazingly all the circumstances changed. The gentleman recovered nearly 90% (except for a slight lameness in walking) of his health and became fully functional. Perhaps on the strength of some loans which his bankers advanced, his business began to thrive again and he got back his car. I am sure that they must have been ardent devotees of the Lord in their earlier births and their faith was unshakable.

That lady along with her husband continues to visit me very often whenever I camp in South India and most of the times she brings a number of new

devotees - a bus load of them and very often brings sumptuous lunch for me with varieties of dishes. Whenever I protested that I had very little to do with her prosperity, she firmly declares “Swamiji, you can't cheat me or dupe me into believing these words. I have seen the truth with my own eyes.” May the Lord strengthen the faith and devotion of such persons to the Lord and to the Mahatmas / saints / sadhus.

15. GOD POURS HIS BLESSINGS

In another case, while I was in SRI RAMANASRAMAM at Tiruvannamalai in 2004, a lady named Mrs Rohini came all the way from Kerala along with her nine year old daughter and her parents to see me. She had read my earlier book of reminiscences “FRAGRANT FLOWERS” and had already chosen me as her Guru. She, therefore, desired that she should get Mantra Diksha from me. I was then keeping a vow of silence in that Ashram, as commanded by Bhagawan, for one year from July ‘2003 and it was April or May ’04 which was running. I wrote on a piece of paper and expressed my inability to give her Diksha She was adamant and refused to take a ‘no’ for an answer and she would not leave my room without a “yes” from me.

At last I had to relent. She came and sat in my room early next morning while her 10 year old daughter Reshma and her parents were sitting outside in the verandah. Before I could begin, her daughter Reshma opened the door of my room with a bang, came and sat down saying “Swamiji, you are giving me also Diksha.” She told it vehemently in good English I was under her spell and unable to refuse. I gave the same mantra to both and clarified the doubts raised by the daughter.

Then the daughter told me that her father was working in Muscat and they were unable to join him for the last four years as the employer had refused to sponsor a family visa. Both mother and daughter were very miserable and requested that I should bless them. Soon after she left for her hometown, Rohini wrote a letter detailing the following incident which took place on her way back to her hometown.

Rohini and family were going in a bus from Palakkad. While sitting in the bus she was thinking ‘I’ have heard that the Guru always remains by the side of his disciple and whenever he is sincerely called he will appear before the disciple. Is it true in my case and will he help me in dire distress?” That same

moment, as the brakes failed or some problem arose, the driver shouted “Accident” and the bus was heading fast headlong towards a big tree on the side of the road. A collision was imminent Rohini shouted in panic “Gurudev” and the collision was averted as the driver was able to bring the bus to a standstill when it was just 5 or 6 inches away from the tree. She then saw her Gurudev standing by the side of the driver smiling. The driver and the conductor checked the bus thoroughly but no fault was visible, it was in perfect condition. Then they reached home safely.

Within three months of their taking Diksha, Rohini’s husband got a job in Dubai. By July/August ’04 he got visas for his wife and child. On 1-9-04 Rohini rang me up at Lucknow and told me complainingly “Swamiji, we were promised seats by today’s flight to Dubai but at the last minute the Airlines declared that the plane was full. This entire month, no reservation is available. See our ill-luck.” Again she rang me up in the evening of the same day and told me that she got confirmed tickets for 3-9-04.

Within a couple of months of reaching Dubai Rohini also got the job of a teacher in a school and the child also got admission.

In July 2005, the entire family of Rohini came from Dubai to Trivandrum where I was invited by some of the residents to participate in a Bhagavata Saptaham being conducted by some hundred devotees and I was to give short discourses too. On 10th July I was to give a public discourse in an Auditorium on “Arunachala Mahatmya”.

That very day Reshma, the daughter composed in Malayalam a beautiful heart-rending song on “Gurudeva” and sang it as the invocation song before my talk in the Auditorium. Everybody applauded it. While at Trivandrum she never left my side and was always enquiring “Swarmiji, I am your most favourite disciple. It is not so?” She always said “Swamiji I want nothing in this world I only want you, my Gurudev.”

When the girl Reshma returned to Dubai, she composed four or five more songs on Gurudev in August/September 05. She was invited by Kairali T.V. at Dubai to sing all those songs and they were relayed a few days later in the TV. Her parents and grandparents say that Reshma was never that much of an expert in Malayalam but she had used such rare words in the song that her grandfather had to refer to a dictionary for their meaning.

When God gives, He gives with both hands and nobody can excel Him in generosity. The only prerequisites are intense faith and devotion. Yes, sometimes may get problems and miseries too in a generous measure due to past actions in order to train us for the spiritual path leading to the ultimate perennial Bliss. We should accept them also and never waver in our faith. With out continued prayers, He will make our path easy and take us out of the miseries too. We may also take it as a test of our faith and devotion.

16. EFFICACY OF MANTRAS

In my life as a monk, even though many have been coming to me either for satsang or for specific guidance in spiritual matters, equally good number of persons have approached me for solution of problems in their life - for example, serious ailments/diseases not being amenable to cure through doctors and medicines, non-marriage of daughters, not begetting a child, sons and daughters not being able to get selected in competitive examinations and interviews, mental depression etc, etc. As I was being forced to do something concrete for them and as neither myself

not the devotees had full faith that my blessings alone would help in these cases, I started giving some appropriate Mantras to be recited daily. Even though most of the mantras have been given to me while yet a boy of 12 to 14 years by my father who was, inter alia, an expert in the field of Mantras. I never believed that they would prove so efficacious. As I found that the results in almost all the cases were amazing and quick too, these Mantras have since been recorded with elaborate details in a book titled “infallible Vedic Remedies” Printed by Omkar Offset Printers, Bangalore-2 in 2005 and distributed free to seekers. A number of instances have been given therein where the persons who approached me got their problems solved in an astonishing way through the glory of Vedic Mantras. Just like a person who felt highly grateful to the shop-keeper from whose shop he had purchased a common medicine prescribed by a doctor, many of the beneficiaries of these Mantras began to regard me with great awe and devotion as if it was my power which was behind all the benefits that accrued to them. Everything is done by God and God alone. He is an all-capable whole-sale agent who does not require the assistance of any self-styled retail

agents like me. But the Lord, in His mercy and compassion and for reasons best known to Him, stands behind the curtain, drenches the needy devotees with His benign munificence, shoves the hose-pipe into the hand of a poor Mahatma like me and allows the latter to take all the credit.

17. GOD GRANTS A CHILD

A gentleman (K) at Lucknow approached me three years back or so for a mantra to get a child. The couple have had some medical problems for which they got treated by specialist doctors Even after that, they got a child which was either born dead or died soon after birth. The doctors were not hopeful of their getting any more children. Even though the couple belonged to a minority religion which was considered by most of them to be outside Hinduism, they came and took the Santana Gopala Mantra from me with great devotion and faith. Within a year a child was born to them and is perhaps now (in 2005) more than two years old. During my subsequent visits to Lucknow he used to come to me every day and insist on having Mantra-Diksha also (for final liberation) from me.

18. ACCUSED RELEASED FROM JAIL

In some town in Haryana (perhaps in 2003) a gentleman approached me for help as his son dealing in Gold, Foreign Exchange etc., had been jailed as he was accused of having perpetrated many a violation against the Laws of the country and thus derived a lot of unlawful benefits. The case was considered very serious by the father. I myself did not know what to do and finally instructed that Ramnam (Sri Ram. Sn Ram etc.) be written (minimum of 108 times daily) either by his son in the jail or by the father on behalf of his son. During my recent visit to the same place I was informed that within two weeks of their beginning to write Ramnam, the accused was unconditionally released from the jail after being acquitted.

19. CANCER PAIN AMELIORATED

A close friend of mine and a very good devotee of the lord gat prostate cancer and was operated thrice within short intervals. After the operation he was beset with a lot of pain and various problems as an off-shoot of the operations. I suggested to him that he could try doing Dhanvantari Mantra. Even though he was not completely cured, he got considerable

amelioration of his pain and other problems within a fairly short time by chanting Dhanvantari Mantra

20. SILENCE FOR ONE YEAR

Starting from 1995 I have been regularly going to and staying in SRI RAMANASRAMAM in Tiruvannamalai every year. I was being forcibly attracted to Bhagavan Romana - a unique star in the galaxy of the greatest saints of the world. During my stay I used to go round the Samadhi of Bhagawan daily a number of times.

It is told in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad- "न तस्य प्राणा उत्क्रामन्ति, ब्रह्मैव सन्ब्रह्माप्येति ॥ 4.4.6 ॥". On the death of an enlightened soul who has become one with the Supreme Being (Brahman), his 'vital elan (Prana) does not go out through the lighted path or the dark path as in the case of non-enlightened persons but gets absorbed in that very earth. The Pranic energy of the realised soul's body pervades the entire area of the Samadhi where the body is interred. Hence the vicinity of the Samadhi is capable of giving all benefits- spiritual and temporal- to all the devotees who visit the Samadhi.

In July 2004 I got a command from Bhagavan that commencing from the Guru Poornima Day that month I was to be in complete silence for one full year and during that period I should not leave Tiruvannamalai. In emergent circumstances I might go out (say for medical consultations) but should not stay out for more than one night at a time. When I informed the President of Ramanasramam, he was extremely kind enough to allow me to remain in the Ashram for the entire period of Moun (silence). This period of silence was a great experience and provided lessons in many aspects.

In the beginning, I was more strict with myself in that I did not even respond to the greetings of other friends. One day in July `03 one lady remarked: -

“Swamiji, Mouna does not mean that you should look grim always. At least, you can smile back when we greet you. It will not militate against your vow of silence. Are we not all children of bliss?” From then on I began to smile and fold by hands in response to others' greetings. I had practically no communication with people as I stopped writing letters or replies to letters. Very rarely when people came to me from afar or from abroad and very sincerely put questions on

spiritual sadhanas or yearned for guidance or for Mantra Diksha, I used to write down short replies or give Mantra Diksha to rare few seekers. It was at that time that one Mrs. Saraswati, an old American lady known as Ellen Rose Miller, used to come both in the morning as also in the afternoon and sit quietly in meditation in my presence for an hour each session daily from September middle up to about the middle of December (she died on 22-12-04) and for a few days brought two or three other friends too. I strictly requested her in writing not to bring any one to my room She had been in the company of many saints both Indian and foreign. On 12th Sept'03 she first met me and the next day she wrote a long letter and gave it to me. She mentioned that during the night preceding she had a wonderful blissful "out of the body" experience (no details) for the first time. Throughout the morning, on re-collecting that experience, she had been crying with happiness "Oh God! Oh God!"

Slowly as days of silence went on, my mind became more and more reluctant to raise thoughts and became absolutely peaceful and quiescent. Speech is a major action expressing what is thought

out. As the thoughts failed to result in speech I became reluctant to translate thoughts into other types of action too. It almost looked that due to lack of verbalisation / communication, I was moving far far away from the world and the people to a solitary world of my own where myself alone existed.

I also became a misfit in societies where people used to gossip on spiritual matters either comparing Mahatmas or relating juicy stories of scandals or sharing some interesting jokes, as my silence prohibited me in participating and contributing to their gossip. There were times when I could not express my irritation or anger as a result of which I ceased to have any reactions even mentally to such situations. While going around the Samadhi in its narrow lane many people are found slowly walking in the middle in a zig zag manner with both arms kept widely waving to and fro freely not giving way for others to go either to their right or left. It is bound to irritate those who walk behind and are in a hurry. In another instance, you can see people washing their hands in the series of taps and another set of people waiting behind them when the devotees washing their hands would violently shake off the water from their

hands so that the people waiting behind would find the spicy water from those holy hands sprinkled over their face and body. Even with all the restraint one could muster, many would get irritated and tempted to give a bit of their mind to the sprinklers of water. In all such cases I had to impose a special restraint on myself in order to avoid breaking my vow of silence.

I had seen some superior people scoffing – "What is the use of keeping your mouth shut and allowing the mind to chatter? The real silence is the silence of the mind." I have practically seen that immense benefits did accrue to me during the one year of silence. Bhagavan Ramana says: "The silence is increasing eloquence". I experienced the truth of this statement during my period of silence when I learnt many lessons. During this long period of silence my periods of meditation also increased a lot. During the entire year up to mid-2004, once or twice I had to break the silence when I had to go to Chennai for a day to consult a surgeon regarding an emergent critical physical problem.

21. THE MOTHER'S CALL TO PONDY

During this period of silence, in November 2003, an interesting incident took place. On the day previous to the Samadhi day of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, I heard a sweet foreign feminine voice (at about 12 noon on 16th and 17th November 2003), enquiring – "A number of devotees including people from abroad will be coming tomorrow to have my darshan. Being so near (2½ hours' journey by car) won't you come and see me?" Immediately it flashed into my mind that this was the Mother's call.

Even though in the past three or four years earlier to 2003 I had often been going and staying at Aurobindo Ashram at the invitation of one of the ardent old devotees of the Mother, who was also a senior Trustee (Mr. H) I was never that attached to the Mother to deserve a special invitation. It was a surprise to me. I went to the house of a friend of mine (Mr C) who had contacts in Pondicherry and informed him of the situation in writing. He phoned Mr. N at Pondy, who told him that all the hotels and guest houses were fully booked. The Personal Secretary to the Trustee (Mr. H) also told him that all the rooms in

H's guest house were occupied and directed us not to disturb by phoning him direct. At my behest Mr. C asked Mr. N of Pondy to meet me at Pondy Bus stand at 6 p.m. and also to try again in all the Ashram guest houses for my accommodation for one night. I went to another friend Mr. 'V' and asked him to accompany me to Pondy. When we reached Pondy bus stand by bus Mr. N. confirmed that all guest houses were fully booked and he was also not in a position to give me shelter in his small house. I asked 'N' to take me to the International Guest House and I requested the Manager for a room (in writing). He said that five minutes back one of the occupants had vacated his room pre-maturely and thus gave me a key to a double room (rent Rs. 150 per day). On enquiry we were told that next morning from 7 a.m. onwards tokens would be given in various booths and with these tokens one has to join the queues outside the Ashram. One was expected to be let into the Mother's room (opened for public only once a year) in about 2 to 2¾ hours' time. The next day morning we had our bath by 4 a.m. and decided to go for a walk up to the Ashram. When we reached, we saw some 70 m 80 people standing in two queues before an entrance. We were told that they

were all staff members who were to be allowed in for a special darshan. We also joined the queue and were inside the Mother's room within half an hour. The attendants inside the room, when they saw me wearing a monk's attire, invited me to sit in a corner, where I meditated for half an hour and left. When the Mother had invited me it was her duty to provide all the facilities! What compassion of the Mother? Out of millions of her devotees around the world, why should she invite me, an insignificant beggar? God's ways are mysterious and nobody can understand them.

22. MIRACLE IN SANT RAM ASHRAM

It was perhaps in 1994 or so. I was staying in Gandhi Ashram near Palij in Gujarat. One day three Government Officers who were staying in my neighbouring room fell into conversation with me. They told me: - "Swamiji, you must go to Sant Ram Ashram at Nadiad. The Mahant of that Ashram 'Narayan Das Maharaj' (not alive now) is a Siddha Purusha. You must have his darshan. Let us tell you our own experience about him. A couple of years back we three went one Sunday (from Gandhinagar) to Sant Ram Ashram, Nadiad. We found the Mahant lounging

on an easy chair surrounded by hundreds of people. Whoever put Rs. 50 or more at his feet was given a prasad packet and those who put considerable amounts in cash or by cheque were given larger packets. Others were not given any prasad. Further, within five minutes, before we could talk to him, the Mahant walked away into the inner compartments (it was 11 a.m.). When we pleaded with the attendants to have a personal interview with him, the latter turned it down flatly and told us to come back at 4 p.m. when the Mahant would be back again at the Audience Chamber. We had to return to Gandhinagar immediately and so we walked out in sheer disgust talking about the pomp and show of these Mahants. When we reached the outside entrance gate, two Brahmacharis came rushing to us and asked us whether we were Government offices from Gandhinagar. On our affirmation they said “Come along with us the Mahantji wants to meet you in his room.” The moment the Mahantji saw us, he began a tirade in Gujarati: “Never judge any spiritual man from his external behaviour. When a spiritual man has to move with the world sometimes he is forced to have some pomp and show and so on. We were

dumbfounded. He knew what all we thought and talked about him. Swamiji. you must have his darshan once." A couple of months later I went to Sant Ram Ashram at Nadiad. On enquiry I was told that I have to meet Mahantji (Sri Narayan Das Ji Maharaj) who alone would allot accommodation for me. I saw Mahantji sitting in an easy chair with his long legs extended fully, surrounded by numerous devotees who were offering money at his feet and getting prasad. I went and stood in front of him keeping my luggage at one comer of the hall As I was unable to catch his eye I went and stood by his left side but he was continuously talking to some visitor or the other. After a few minutes one Brahmachari 'X' came and tapped my shoulders. He said "Come along with me. Mahantji has ordered me to give you a room." I was surprised, I did not see Mahantji talking to me or any Brahmachari or attendants. Mr. 'X' took me upstairs to a room with bath and toilet next to it. On the way I saw some quadrangular dormitories with a number of beds all being occupied by Sannyasis like me. After showing me the room, he wanted me to go immediately to the dining hall for lunch, where serving had already started.

At about 3 p.m. in the afternoon I went to the Audience Hall which was empty and sat for meditation. After about half an hour I found another Brahmachari 'Y' sitting by my side, who said "Mahantji wants to know whether you would like to have a separate cottage on the other side of this Ashram where you can spend a few days in Sadhana undisturbed." I declined the offer and regretted that I had to leave Nadiad the next day itself. The Mahant and all the devotees assembled again at 4 p.m. but I continued to sit in meditation in one corner as I was unable to talk to the Mahantji, who was busy and even if he were to call me, I did not know what I could talk to him about.

When again the Mahant and all devotees left the hall at about 7 p.m. or so. I also got up from meditation. Brahmachari 'X' of the morning session came and requested me to wait for some more time. After a few minutes he returned with a big plate containing some fruits, prasad, two dhotis and an envelope containing Rs. 100 or more and gave it to me saying that it was as per the orders of the Mahant. I was really surprised at this strange way of darshan and communication without any interview. Yes, Sri Narayan Das Ji Maharaj

must have been a 'Siddha'. The Mahants of Sant Ram Ashram during their entire tenure of presiding over the Ashram (till their final Samadhi) do not come out of the premises of that Ashram. It is also a type of tapasya not to go into the wide outside world and allow only the needy devotees to come to them.

Gurudev, how many saints you have brought me into contact with and how many miracles of thine you have made me witness! But Lord, the greatest of all the miracles is You alone and I want nothing but You.

23. BRINJAL CURRY-A MINOR MIRACLE

Talking of miracles, here is an interesting anecdote:

I was staying inside a room of silence (Moun Mandir) in Hydikhani Baba's Ashram near Ambaji mandir (near Abu Road) in the border of Rajasthan for two months in Dec'03/Jan04. The meals used to be placed inside a small wooden box-like equipment fixed in the wall with two doors - one inside and one outside. The Ashram was run by a caretaker who was also the cook, server, manager - all rolled into one. All the main items of food like vegetable curry, dal, breakfast items etc. contained a good amount of salt

and equal amount of sugar too. There again, the same vegetable (some leafy one) was served day after day on the ground that it was a desert area where no vegetables grew. Often enough I was unable to eat the items which were both sweet and saltish. I consoled myself that "after all I am a monk and I should not be bothered about taste at all" and managed to gulp the food. Due to some communication gap, my tongue backed by my mind, not being aware of my monkhood, continued to rebel.

After nearly a month, one day I stood casually before a photo of Shirdi SAI BABA left in the room by some predecessor and told him in a jocular manner "Baba, I have heard that you fulfil the desires of all who approach you especially in the material field. In my young days my mother used to prepare a curry out of very small whole brinjals (not cut into pieces but with some four incisions with fillings of Masala). Baba, today if the cook were to prepare and serve me the same curry without adding any sugar to the curry and dal. I shall accept that you are a Siddha with mystic powers and revere you all the more." To my great astonishment that day when the cook brought my lunch, I found that there was a whole brinjal curry of

the same specification without any sugar in any item. It was a superb feast for me. Not only that, from that day onwards during the entire month no sugar was added to the salty food items. However, the brinjal curry was never repeated.

Perhaps, it was my Divine Mother who could not withstand seeing the misery of this immature monk and so had to perform the miracle through Shirdi Baba. Has Mother's compassion any limits? All my adorations at the feet of the Divine Mother (who is also known as Ambaji).

24. SEEN IN TWO DIFFERENT PLACES SIMULTANEOUSLY

There was an incident which happened in 2004. Since the time of taking sannyas, whenever I visited Chennai I used to stay at Kotturpuram in the house of Mr. Mani and his elder brother and always in a particular room (a guest room). One night when Mr. Mani heard some noise inside the guest room (bolted from outside), he opened the door and found me sitting in meditation in the middle of the room with a rosary in my hand. I was at that time staying in Ramanasramam at Tiruvannamalai. This incident was

narrated to me by Mr. Mani when he met me a few months later at the Ashram. Mr. Mani affirms that it was not a dream but that he had seen my figure very clearly with his eyes for a few minutes before it disappeared. Similar incidents had happened in the life of my Guru Maharaj also where people have seen and talked to him at Dehra Dun when all the while he was in his ashram at Vasishtha Guha in Tehri Garhwal. Mahatmas have explained it saying that the Mahatma seen elsewhere was the Lord himself in that form and in most of the cases the saints who were impersonated elsewhere by the Lord Himself were not aware of the incidents at all till they were informed of them. No man can understand the Leelas of the Lord or their purpose.

25. ZHOYA, THE IRANIAN CANADIAN

Sometime in 2003, one Miss Zhoya, a Canadian medical student of Iranian origin had come to Ramanasramam and was staying in some room. One morning she came and knocked at my door. She told me that she was brought to my room by a cat which pulled her by her pants and escorted her to my room. The moment she saw my Guruji's photo in my room

she was stunned. She told me: "A few years back I had been to the Samadhi of a Sufi saint in some Arab country where I saw your Gurudev standing on one side of the tomb." For nearly a month or so till she stayed at Arunachala, despite my strong protests she used to bring tender coconuts and a lot of oranges or apples every day. For two days she said that she saw me standing inside her locked room in Ramanasramam early in the morning when she opened her eyes. I plead 'not guilty' to all such statements.

26. LORD'S COMPASSION

The Lord's kindness, love and compassion towards me are boundless. How a major operation was got done in the stomach/intestinal region in the clinic of a world-famous surgeon in Chennai on 30.12.04 completely free of charge while it should have costed nearly Rs. 3 lakhs, how Swami Sadasivananda, an American Swamiji (a monk from 1974) voluntarily came and attended on me day and night for fifteen days in the Hospital and how a family of four daughters and their mother was sending morning tea, breakfast, lunch, dinner etc., prepared in an excellent way to the

Hospital for all the 15 days to both the Swamijis have all been narrated in detail in my book "Infallible Vedic Remedies" published from Bangalore. Again and again God has given me ample proof of His existence, His protection and His guidance. Even if I were to use my entire body as Lord's doormat in every life of mine I could never be free from the debt of gratitude I owe to such a loving God. There is only one Infinite Reality who is our very Self. So long as we are aware of our body, consider ourselves as spiritual aspirants or seekers (Sadhakas who do sadhana) God whom we may consider as apart from ourselves is also as true as the one Infinite Reality and we may imagine Him in any form we want i.e. as Rama, Krishna, Siva, the Divine Mother etc. That is why, even after reaching the highest realisation of the Reality, Sri Ramakrishna. Ma Anandamayee, Bhagavan Ramana did not cease to worship the Mother Kali, Krishna and Arunachaleshwara (Siva) respectively. Even Adi Sankara, the founder of Advaita has written hymns of adoration on every personal God conceivable including on Ganga and Narmada as divinities. For many who have developed their heart and are emotional, loving their personal God intensely and

constantly remembering and praying to Him will be the easiest path to their goal of God-realisation. If we think that the ultimate Reality or God is not capable of assuming the form of Rama. Krishna etc., as desired by the devotee, will it not be tantamount to an impertinence of limiting the power of the All-powerful Infinity?

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METHODS OF GETTING HAPPINESS AND REMOVING ALL MISERIES OF THE WORLD

The purpose of life is to get plenty of perennial happiness with no trace of misery or unhappiness. Like the sheep which follow the leader unquestionably, we are all normally adopting the same means and treading the footsteps of our predecessors viz. earning plenty of money, indulging in free sex and in all types of enjoyments like varieties of food, getting married, procreating children, acquiring houses, clothes and various other possessions in plenty, getting name and fame etc. All these, however, result in miseries like serious diseases, mental depressions and perhaps some droplets of transient and momentary pleasures in between. Even if we have pleasures all through our life, we become miserable and frightened as age advances at the very thought of death which gives us the greatest sorrow of our life.

The experiences of one and all have proved that no lasting happiness can be found in this external world as no object in this world will itself last for ever. The experience and the knowledge (say of Maths,

Physics, Chemistry etc.) we get from the outside world is termed as 'tution' while the knowledge we get from inside (from the inner self) is termed as 'in-tuition, When happiness is not found in the outside world then necessarily it has to be found inside. The owner of this Super Bazaar of happiness inside is termed as God, Supreme Being etc. When we do not allow any thoughts to come from outside i.e. when we stop all thoughts relating to this world and worldly objects we are then only inside. The longer and more intensely we withdraw our thoughts (mind) from this outside world the deeper we will go inside. This process of withdrawing our attention and interest from the outside world by stopping all such thoughts and placing all our attention on the inner shop run by the inner Self or God is real meditation which leads us to the infinite bliss. This end-result has been confirmed by all the saints and sages of all ages and of all major religions like Christianity. Buddhism, Sufism (Sufi saints of Islam) etc.

All people may not be satisfied with the brief explanation given above. Many want to know that (i) if the inner Reality is said to be all-pervasive and self-revealing why then we cannot get the happiness here

and now in the external world, (ii) if all that happens is by the will of the Lord, it should mean that it is He who made us do the wrong actions and is it not then unfair that we should be made to suffer the miserable consequences of this KARMA in the next birth and (iii) when every happening and every event of our life takes place by the will of the Lord (pre-destined) and we have no free will of our own where is the question of our effort or sadhana to achieve Bliss or Moksha and what is there left for us to do? There are all types of seekers and aspirants and some of them cannot proceed on this path unless their doubts of 'why' and 'how' are resolved. Here is a story:

When Brahma the creator was doing his act of creation, there were four persons who were watching. The first person asked Brahma "How are you doing it?" He was a scientist. The second person enquired - "Why are you doing it?" He was a philosopher. The third person asked - "Sir, what do you get out of all this?" He was a businessman or a Real estate agent. The last person was silently applauding the act of the Creator in sheer ecstatic delight. He was a mystic - a sage.

The clue for the questions raised above is to be found in our dream-state. A dreamer who is sleeping all alone in his room dreams that he is camping in a forest along with ten friends each of whom is engaged in some act or other - one cooking, one singing, one reading a book etc. This is a drama pre-conceived by our mind though we are not conscious of it. The ten friends, the actors in this drama, were not brought from outside but they were all created out of our own consciousness and were creatures of our imagination inside our brain (the dream drama does not take place outside in space). We are then aware of our separate existence in the dream but are not conscious that this dream is unreal and is running at the will of the only Reality i.e. we ourselves are the dreamers. All the miseries and pleasures we experience in the dream are not real at all and the only way to escape from the miseries is not to search for a remedy in the dream world but to wake up by aborting the dream and along with it the entire dream world. This is Moksha or Liberation. It was we who bound ourselves and ten other friends too in our imagination. When we got out of our imagination, we found that the dream world never existed at all and we became aware of our own

real self as the dreamers. All our problems and doubts as to how to escape the miseries arise only in our dream and once, we wake up, such questions of 'why' and 'how' are rendered meaningless. During the dream every incident looks real and it is meaningless to search for remedies for each individual danger, calamity etc. but one has to wake up from the dream. This entire so-called waking state of our life is only a dream, and the so-called sleeping state as also the dream state are both dreams inside the dream of "waking state." This is what the great saints and sages of yore, as also of modem days, have averred and the scriptures (records of experiences of past sages) confirm. So instead of wasting our time with questions and doubts by analysing the false state of imagination, we should try to get out of the dream dreamt by the cosmic dreamer called 'Brahman' (the only Reality) by becoming one with the magna-dreamer also called God or Self. In a drama, the author has the right to write the script in any manner he likes by making the hero go through so many miseries and while enacting it, if the hero identifies himself with the role he plays and forgets who he really is, he will feel miserable. Here the actors are not individuals who

have the right to complain that they undergo miseries while enacting the drama because it is the Lord Himself who plays all the roles and all the actors are products of His imagination as the Drama itself.

Now the question is “How to wake up from the dream?” The dream came by itself and I as an actor in the dream have no control over its running or breaking it up. In the dream world created (though without external consciousness) I established a relationship with one of the houses as its possessor saying ‘this is my house’. Similarly, I established a relationship of father, husband, friend, enemy, boss,

Guru etc. with different persons and my mind was fully interested in those people and things like houses etc. with love, hatred, sense of possession etc. That is why the dream, a creation of my own mind, was going on for a long time until my mind was suddenly withdrawn due to, say, some big noise in the external world. Then I woke up and the dream disappeared. Hence one method to wake up is to withdraw all your interest and involvement from the objects of the waking world and to have no desires for any object or status in the waking world which is only a dream. Our minds are under our control and the Karma theory of

past actions compelling us does not arise. Then the dream breaks up. You are one with the cosmic Dreamer, the Lord.

God has put so many exit doors for getting out of the dreams. The saints and sages, the Guru and the scriptures constitute some of the exit doors.

Sometimes when we see a nightmare we shout in terror “Save me. Save me" and wake up. Similarly, in order to get out of the dream we should shout loudly taking the name of the Lord and pray to Him sincerely “Lord, save us from the nightmare of this life.”

Even though in a drama we have to act as per the pre-written script and speak only the prescribed dialogues, nothing prevents us from thinking of our house, son, wife etc. and so long as the drama goes on nicely, the Director cannot detect what we are thinking of. Here, while acting in the drama of life if we keep our mind on the Lord and constantly think of Him. the Director i.e. the Lord will detect our lack of interest in the drama and will take us out of the drama (i.e. Moksha).

The ultimate perception of all objects of the world and of happiness, sorrows, fear etc. is all through the mind. There is no object as such which can give us

happiness or unhappiness giving rise to likes and dislikes. To illustrate, long ago two young men Ram and Kishan went to U.S.A, from a remote village in India. For a long time there was no news about them to their parents who lived at their village. After years, when another resident Mr. Govind went to U.S.A, on a short trip, he was commissioned to contact and bring news of the welfare of the two young people who had gone earlier. He was able to meet Ram who informed him that Kishan had died years back soon after his arrival in U.S.A, and that he himself was in a good job and had amassed a lot of money. Ram also requested Govind to inform Kishan's parents about the sad demise of their son and his own parents about his prosperity and the likelihood of his returning to India within another six months.

Govind somehow got confused about the identities of Ram and Kishan. As a result, he informed Ram's father wrongly that Ram had died in U.S.A, while he told Kishan's parents that their son Kishan had prospered well and contemplated returning to India in another six months' time (while Kishan was the person who had died). Kishan's parents became jubilant and very happy and celebrated their joy by

giving a dinner party to their friends. Ram's parents were full of grief and conducted all the funeral rites for Ram as per the Hindu tradition. Obviously, Ram being alive, he could not have been the cause of the sorrow of his parents. Similarly, Kishan having been dead could not have been the cause of the happiness of his parents. The happiness and sorrow had emanated from the minds of the respective parents. Thus, the reactions of love and hatred to persons and objects and reactions of like and dislike are all in the mind. If only one strives consciously to get rid of all conditionings of like and dislike or love and hatred and to develop an attitude of choiceless acceptance, one will no longer have desires to acquire things. Anyone who gets rid of all his desires merrily reaches the gate of enlightenment. It is told in the Upanishads that such a person reaches the state of Brahman here and now[3].

The only means to have God-realisation is to eliminate the mind. The mind is not an organ like an

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[3] यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ 2.3.14 ॥
Katha Upanishad

eye or an ear but is only a bundle of thoughts continuously arising one after the other. So, elimination of the mind is elimination of all thoughts. The Royal path to the Lord has been defined in PATANJALI YOGA SUTRA as "Yoga is control of the mind"[4]. Hence practising to sit daily without thoughts for an hour or two is one of the methods leading to God-realisation. Initially, thoughts of the past experiences - both pleasant and unpleasant - would creep in but one should not relive those experiences of happiness, anger etc., by identifying oneself with those thoughts. One should allow those thoughts imbedded in the sub-conscious mind to go out and oneself remain as a mute witness to those thoughts. As thoughts of future are only projections of the past and nobody can predict what is going to happen in the next moment, one can avoid them by reasoning.

The other method used for elimination of thoughts is the most practicable, reliable, easy, highly effective and traditional one. That is getting initiated into one of the Mantras through a master (Guru) coming from a reputed lineage of Gurus, who is free

[4] योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥ 1.2 ॥ Patanjali Yogasutra

from all carnal desires for all objects of enjoyment and for accumulation of money, riches, huge mansions in the name of ashrams and who is always immersed in thoughts of the Supreme Lord. If we are sincere and have an intense volcanic longing for God-realisation with intense vairagya i.e., with utter disregard for all worldly objects, social enjoyment, money, name and fame etc., the right Guru will come and knock at the door of the aspirant. The mantra given by the Guru should be one as prescribed in the Mantra Sastra (scriptures) and not one manufactured by the modem Gurus in the name of their own respective Gurus on the model of the standard mantras, like “OM NAMO BHAGAWATE RAMANANDAYA or KRISHNANANDAYA" etc. In Bhagawad Gita Lord Krishna has clearly explained that a person who transgresses the injunctions and the methods prescribed in the scriptures but performs actions prescribed in scriptures in any manner he likes by introducing innovations of his own will never succeed in his endeavour to realise God[5]. The Mantras in the Sastras

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[5] य: शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारत: |
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् || 16.23|| Gita

were all introduced to the world by great sages of yore who had experimented and realised the deities through the same Mantras which they got through inspiration from various deities.

These mantras should be chanted for hours daily - this process being called 'Japa'. While chanting one should think of the meaning of the Mantra[6]. The meaning of all the Mantras is God or the chosen deity like Narayana, Krishna. Siva etc., to be thought of as the ultimate Supreme Being (not as different gods or deities). One should not try to think of the dictionary meaning of the words in the Mantra (some words called BIJAKSHARAS have no meaning). Each syllable in a mantra is a potent energy capsule capable of removing the impediments like Vasanas (latent conditioning) and revealing the Divinity in us. By Japa alone one could attain success in one's spiritual endeavour. The Japa involving concentration on a single thought i.e. Mantra first reduces our multiple thoughts to one and ultimately this one thought also will disappear leading to a thoughtless state and finally to Samadhi state where the body sense and ego

[6] तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् ॥ 1.28 ॥ **Patanjali Yogasutra**

disappear and the Pure Consciousness alone remains. The Late Oriya Baba of Brindawan used to say "Japat Siddhir Japat Siddih Japat Siddhir Nirantaram." Japa alone can take you to God realisation.

Another alternative is Nama Japa. God's names like Ram. Shiva etc., are also in the same category as any mantra and constant chanting of those names mentally or loudly can also lead to God-realisation. (Mantras should not be chanted loudly). Initiation through a Guru is not a 'must' for Nama-Japa; but if taken through a proper Guru it is no doubt very beneficial. In the recent times, late Swami Ramdas of Anandashram (Kanhagad, Kerala), Late Yogi Ramsurat Kumar of Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu) and Late Pujya Mota of Nadiad (Gujarat) were some of the illustrious saints who emphasised Nama Japa alone. The former two propagated "OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM" and Mota propagated "HARI OM HARI OM HARI OM HARI OM". The chanting of "HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE, HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE" has been extolled as the greatest MAHA MANTRA especially in the present Kali Yuga.

Constant remembrance of God (Satata Smaranam) is the main key to God-realisation. Mantra Japa and Nama Japa are some of the means of constant remembrance. In addition, one should also practise to feel constantly the presence of God at all times. We may imagine while walking, talking, sleeping, sitting, eating, playing and seeing TV. etc., that God is always walking, sitting etc., by our side. It is actually not an imagination but a fact we are not aware of. In due course, we will in reality be able to feel the presence of God. It will be extremely beneficial if we could also talk to God every day for half an hour and pray to him. Prayer is very effective especially in an emergency or crisis. If one could pray for half an hour before sitting for meditation, the mind will be able to concentrate better leading to intense and deep meditation. Prayer is where you talk and the Lord listens. Meditation is where the Lord talks and you listen. There are two good books on how to practise the presence of God - (1) Letters from Brother Lawrance and (2) 'How you can talk with God' by Paramhansa Yogananda available at YOGADA ASHRAM of Dakshineswar or Ranchi.

For those who take up Japa, the Japa itself leads them to the stages of meditation and finally to the

ultimate undifferentiated state of Consciousness called the Samadhi state. For people to whom Japa does not appeal or those who are allergic to the terms God. Lord etc. several methods of meditation have been prescribed in the Upanishads like Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka. Today numerous innovative methods of meditation have been evolved all over the world for which courses have been advertised attracting lots of customers and no doubt irrespective of whether the aspirants benefitted or not, those who run such courses earn a lot of money and are thus benefitted in no uncertain terms. The Chhandogya Upanishad has warned us against the catastrophic and calamitous effect of taking up such partial meditations where the integral Totality has been ignored and certain aspects or parts only are taken up as objects of meditation.

Last but not the least, for those who do not feel inclined to do mantra japa or namajapa, saints like Ramana Maharshi have prescribed “Surrender to the Lord” (Saranagati) as an equally effective alternative. This is where we give full power of attorney (irrevocable) to God and tell Him “LORD THY WILL ALONE BE DONE. I am only a puppet in thy hands. I

accept thy decrees unconditionally with pleasure. I am thy child. Guide me as you will. I shall do all actions you assign to me in this world as thy work considering me as your instrument through which thy will is executed. I am not the doer, my Lord. It is you and you alone. I do not want any fruit of my actions, good or bad. I WANT YOU ALONE. You may kick me or kiss me - I am lying at your holy feet."[7]

Lastly, the most important factor in liberation is Lord's compassion and mercy for which we have to pray. No amount of sadhana alone can make us qualified for liberation unless Lord's grace descends on us. There is an interesting story:

There were ten sadhaks in one colony at Delhi all of whom used to do intense sadhana day and night for years. They were sure that they were overdue for their Moksha and were somewhat irritated by the delay. One day they all got an e-mail from God asking them to assemble the next day in Sri Rama's temple in their colony at 4 p.m. where their merits will be assessed through a question paper on their sadhana which was to be answered on the answer sheets to be provided.

[7] ठुकरा दो या प्यार करो

Two of the ten who get the maximum number of marks will be given Moksha immediately and taken to the Lord's abode. Two of them did not go to the tryst as one of them was busy with the negotiation for the marriage of the first of his three daughters while the other had just started building a house with the help of a housing loan. The remaining eight, when they reached the temple, found question papers and the blank answer sheets ready. As soon as they completed their work, the answer sheets disappeared and came back in a few minutes. The first two top rankers got 10 marks and 9 marks respectively but the maximum marks for the question paper were not indicated anywhere. As they were pretty sure that they should have got these marks out of ten marks (maximum), out of their ego they asked God "This mark 10 or 9 is out of what i.e. out of 10 or 20 etc.?" Pat came a reply from the heavens "It is out of pity, grace and compassion."

In any University examination or other examinations if a candidate fails by missing the minimum pass mark by one or two marks, the moderation committee which finalises the results grants one or two grace marks and declares him passed. If the candidate had written nothing at all on

the answer sheet, he would not be considered for grace marks. We have to make enough efforts by praying and calling on God ceaselessly -by constantly meditating on Him or doing Japa or by singing His names - to get His Grace showered on us. May all become the recipients of Lord's mercy and Grace and be blessed with Infinite Bliss.

Hari Om

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The Tar Baby

A lovable baby I am, very alluring
of golden complexion too
Everybody loves to hug me
Touch me not. I'm a tar baby.

One gets besmeared with coal tar
Oozing out from inside of me
when once one hugs me
But is never dismayed
Touch me not, I'm a tar baby.

People know what happens when they hug me
They can't help touching me the baby
They love being sprayed with tar
They proudly display themselves too
Touch me not. I'm a tar baby.

People have named me as 'The world'
Shining but inside all pitch tar
Remaining in the certainty, that anybody

who comes to me is stuck forever
Touch me not, I'm a tar baby

All people would love to own me if they can
But sages and saints do shun me
What do I care for them
Enough customers are there who fall for me
Touch me not, I'm a tar baby

Those who touch me once
Fall forever into the tiger's mouth
I clutch them tightly
Can't get out, try they may with all their might
Touch me not, I'am a tar baby.

Do you want to escape from my clutch
Call with devotion on One who rides the tiger
The Divine Mother, The Maha Maya
Who alone can release you
Touch me not, I'am a tar baby.

FROM 'THE WORLD'
(A TAR BABY)
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ENDEND

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